121 This work deals only with the Bambara of Ségou and Kaarta since it has already been noted that, save for their specifically local history, [4] a study of their concepts and institutions is valid in general for all of the Bambara.

103 131 It is exceedingly difficult, besides, to be entirely certain as to which of the Bambara actually belong to the Kaarta and

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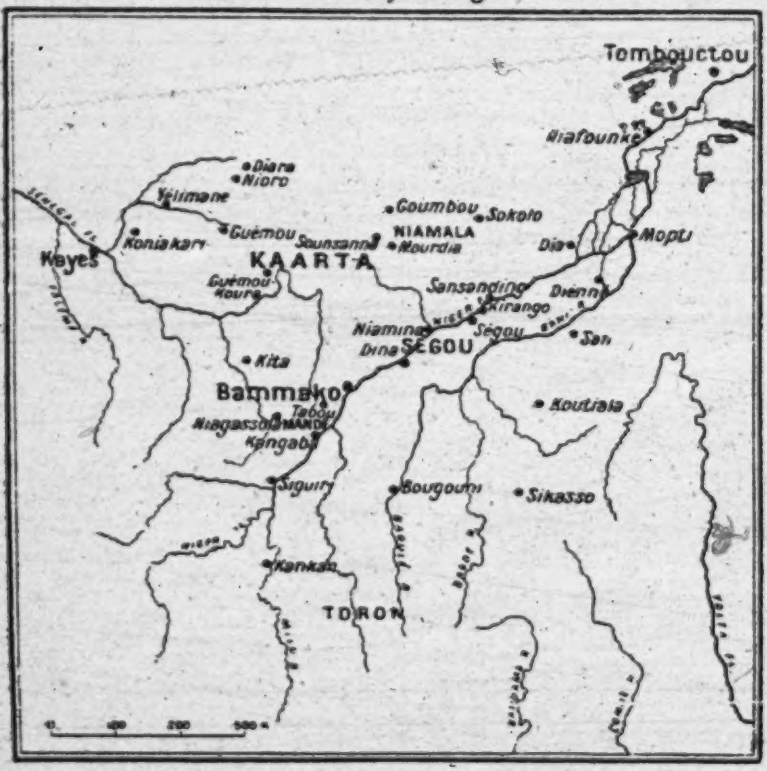

Ségou areas since the two designations do not correspond to any very exact geographical region. When a native speaks of Kaarta or of Ségou, he only vaguely understands the terms, and this with good reason.

101 103 131 I have noted elsewhere (1) that, etymologically speaking, the

1. In my work Les Khassonké [The Kasonke], which appeared in the series, Revue du Monde Musulman.

101 word which we write and pronounce Kaarta means "country of
103 the Karé" or, more accurately, "the group of the Karé." Wher-
131 ever there are Karé people they are called, in the Soninké language, Karu-ta, [5] which is contracted to Karta. From this we made Kaarta because we misheard the long first "a." The word Kaarta designates a particular area only because of the people who inhabit it, and its value as a geographical expression is acquired only by extension. Among the natives the term is used for various areas within the region which extends from Goumbou to Koniakari and from Nioro to the Senegal River. On our maps, Kaarta is bounded by Kingui on the north, Diomboko on the west, Senegal and Bélédougou on the south, and Kaniaga on the east. However, all of these names of cantons themselves have very vague meanings.

101 For the purpose of the present work, the word Kaarta takes
103 on a special meaning. The Bambara who founded a clan at
131 Sounsan-na in the Karé country are called Karta-n-ko in the
614 Soninké language and Karta-n-ka-u (the Kaarta people) in the Bambara language. As a result, Kaarta has become the name of the areas occupied by the clan in its various peregrinations.

The "people of Ségou" acquired their name in quite a different manner, since they were named for Ségou, the capital of the clan. The country of Ségou should be understood strictly to allude to the to-da which, to be described in chapter 5, was, by and large the area surrounding Ségou and occupied by the chief and his family and followers. In a wider sense, the country of Ségou referred to all the territory under the authority of the Ségou clan. At the height of the clan's power, "the country of Ségou" occupied both banks of the Niger, following the axis of the river from Kangaba to Timbuktu.

101 Our European need to have things clearly defined may be
131 satisfied by having the territorial limits of Kaarta and Ségou set
631 forth on a map, but on the native level, with which this book is primarily concerned, such local definition has little relevance. These empires did not aim to dominate any given area but rather sought to exploit as large a number of individuals as possible without regard to country or race.

F 101 103 double meaning is no less evident in the Tarikh-es-Soudan, especially on p. 161 of the French translation. The same double usage is evident in oral traditions.

Thus it is understandable that the word Mandé has come to be considered as an equivalent of our words "empire" and "kingdom" when they are used in a geographical sense, and that, as a result, the term has varied in application because it depended on an ever-changing territorial domain subject to the domination of successive ma.

M F 103 642 However, it is not only from the geographical point of view that the term Mandé has remained indefinite or vaguely defined; the same uncertainty prevails on the political level. In a general way, Mandé is considered to be exclusively the empire of the Mandingue people, who are one of the subdivisions of the group called Mandé by the Europeans (1). In order to

> 1. Mandé, as the name for a group of peoples or of native languages, is unknown to the Sudanese; in this sense it is used exclusively by the Europeans.

understand the meaning attached to the word "empire" in western Sudan, it is essential to place oneself on the native level and not on that of our European civilization from which the term is borrowed.

F B● ● 103 642 [614] Briefly, the Sudanese empire is a system of clans. It is formed by bringing together of elements taken over from clans that have either disintegrated or are in the process of doing so. It acquires power and extension through the influence of the founder or, less frequently, of one of his successors, and then falls into decline at the hands of enemies or as a result of schisms which arise at the death of the ruler on whose success and "flair" its fortunes have depended.

It is this constantly repeated process of grouping, separation and regrouping which dominates the entire [15] history of the Sudanese empires and dynasties and which makes any study of the people so very difficult. The geographical nomenclature is,

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of course, dependent on these social facts. Often a region is named after the people who inhabit it as, for instance, is the case with Kaarta. It may also derive its name from a dominant political group, and when a region has been ruled by successive groups, it acquires a series of superimposed names even though the territories to which they apply may not necessarily be identical; this, too, applies to Kaarta -- a poorly defined region.

This explains how it came about that different empires were lumped together under the same name, Mandé (and other variants). The empire ruled by the Keïta chiefs was merely the last to arise and it presumably dates from the beginning of the thirteenth century.

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One tradition has it that the ancestors of the founders of this thirteenth-century empire came from the east -- specifically from Kong (1). Under the leadership of Kabala Simbo Keïta,

1. I see in this precision nothing more than the usual polarization of which I speak on p. 45 , note 1 .

they settled in Dodougou, a canton whose capital was at Tabou and whose chief, a Bambara of the Konnaté dyamu maintained his power with the help of a militarized group called Mandinké. This was a group similar to those composing the sofa, ton-dyon' or furu-ba-dyon' who supported the fortunes of the clans of Ségou and Kaarta. In the Soninké language the word mandinké means, literally, "a person of the master's (or lord's or king's) household," and in the plural it means "the master's (or king's) people."

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The canton of Kiri (2), adjoining that of Dodougou, was

2. The Dodougou (abbreviated to Do) and the Kiri are, indeed, considered to be the oldest cantons of the so-called Mandé clan. In this connection, see Humblot, "Du nom propre et des appellations chez les Malinké ..." [On Proper Names

*173 In addition to the traditions reported in what follows and emanating from the dyeli traditionists, Karé Tammoura and Gran Koaté, I was given the following explanations concerning the Kouloubali.

According to the first version, the sons of one Péné Kouloubali left Kéniéroba (1), northwest of Kangaba, in order to

1. The period, undefined as always, certainly antedates the seventeenth century.

escape from the pursuit of their enemies. There were three brothers: Mamourou, the eldest, Nzan and Ngolo. They settled in Bani-n-ko at Dougouna, in the home of a blacksmith named Sékolo Balo. When their enemies followed them there, they fought for a year, and then Mamourou persuaded his brothers to flee. So they left, taking Sékolo Balo with them.

They crossed the Baoulé at Kana, thanks to the help of a poyon' who offered to ferry them since they had no boat. Ngolo, who was the last to cross, killed the poyon' and carried the body to Dionforongo (east of Barouéli) where he ate it.

The three brothers came to Ségou-koro-si-do (2), then to

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2. Si-do: "the forest of butter-trees," a place said to be near Ségou-koro.

Sinsala, so named because of the "enclosure" (sinsa) built there by the Bozo, and better known as Sansanding. There, Mamourou advised separating, the better to elude their pursuers. Mamourou returned to Ségou-koro-si-do, and his descendants are the Kouloubali of that region.

Nzan settled near Ségala in a place called Sanabala after his wife Sanaba, by whom he had a son Nto. Nto had a son named Kéfa, who fathered Sama. The latter had four sons: Sara, who lived at Salaga; Touman, at Toumanibougou; Fara, at Diakoro; and Demba at Donguélé.

Ngolo settled at Kourouma, where he became one of the ancestors of the Kouloubali of that region. He married a Moorish

2: Monteil--111 G-5 (1902-1923) 1924 'FA8 Bambara FA8

[103]

History of the Empire of Kaarta

The Descendants of Nya Ngolo

*173 Sounsan (1). When Sounsan and his people had crossed the Niger with the help of the poyon', they proceeded in the direction of Lamballaré (2). There, at the village of Darigo, Sounsan

[55] [845] 1. As we shall see, the given name marks some event connected with the person's birth. It is common practice, when the delivery is difficult, to hang a rabbit's foot at the mother's side, hence the name Sounsan ("rabbit" in Bambara). The name Péné, used elsewhere, has the same etymology.

*173 564 Sounsan is said to have practiced the saddle-maker's trade at Kounando. It is told how one day he went with a kulé (a native carpenter) into the country to get some wood needed for a saddle. At one point the two became separated. The kulé found some honey and ate it, only to be taken sick. He threw up the honey on some stones and then went away. Soon after, Sounsan passed the spot and, seeing the honey, picked it up and ate it. When, on his way back, he learned how the honey happened to be there, he was so disgusted and cursed the kulé so roundly that, since that time, none of his people can touch a kulé with impunity. All members of that caste are thus tne (taboo) for that branch of the Kouloubali.

[103] 2. In the Soninké language, this is the name of the region watered by a swamp

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(lambe, in the local dialect) which, south of Ouossébougou, has its source near Dongué and ends in a pool at Ouaha. In Soninké, "Lamballaré" means literally "on the edge of a watercourse," and the Bambara use "Kodala" in the same sense. In Sounsan's day, this was a small canton ruled by the Soninké of Darigo, a village called Douabougou (market) by the Bambara and situated on one of the branches of the Segabala (of the maps), a tributary of the Baoulé.

According to Raffenel (Vol. I, p. 365), the Soninké village was called Baïko, a name unknown to me and one which seems likely to have resulted from a mishearing of the name Darigo. In any case, its identification with Bammako, as proposed by Raffenel, is unacceptable.

*173 accepted the hospitality of a blacksmith, fa Siné Dyara, asking the latter's protection from probable pursuit by Barama Ngolo. Fa Siné was poor but he is said to have understood the language of the birds and, at the very moment when he was talking to Sounsan, a passing bird told him that powerful chiefs would descend from his guest. That is why he said to Sounsan: "I'm a poor man, but I'll do all I can for you and your descendants. In return, I ask that you promise -- for yourself and for them -- these things: first, that you never kill nor imprison any of my people; then [104] that, every time the head of your family changes, a wife and a horse belonging to the dead man be given to the head of my family."

[695] They swore on a copper anvil which was thrown into a well, and after that fa Siné told Sounsan where he was to settle.

Sounsan was still closely allied to some of the Taraoré, whose descendants now live in the Diangounté area. They gave him a wife named Dougo (1), who was the mother of his son Massa.

1. According to another version, Dougo

775 551 Like this first theory, the second, too, can be accepted, and the names can be translated as a lament of the parents to those who congratulate them: "He is without shame (doubtless he has come back to leave us again)." --"We may as well throw him away (i.e., will he not leave us shortly?)." -- "He is a worthless man (i.e., do you think he will not abandon us?)." -- "He is nothing (i.e., it all is the same to us whether we have him or not; will he stay with us longer than a breath which passes and disappears?)."

But whatever theory is accepted, the Negroes' belief in the reincarnation of children who died at the breast before having attained the use of reason remains unchanged. They are also generally unanimous in believing in the reincarnation of young men and women and men and women who die in the prime of life. Such persons have not completed the whole cycle of their existence and must begin it again.

And what of the old men? Do not they come back to life? When a child brings to mind the features of a deceased elder of the family, does it not receive his name? A Bambara never uses the name of a man whom he respects in vain or in an unsuitable manner; so a child animated by the soul of an old man is given a second name, a borrowed name, and the real name is known only by the father, the mother, close friends, and the one who bears it. However, many are given a most expressive name which testifies to this belief; they are called segi, sagi, "he who has come back to life."

764 775 The legends -- and there are many -- only confirm what I put forward; so need I cite any? An old man of Fobougou, a village about 30 or 40 kilometers from Ségou, not far from the Bani on the road that leads to Koutiala, was given magnificent funeral honors at his death. The fetishes were brought out of their dirty dens and bathed in the blood of victims; the women sang to the sound of the drum for three days running. It was a festival which lacked nothing, not even 775 d'lo, or millet beer. A few years later some young people of the village going in search of work went into the Tlébi (1) region,

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1. The term Tlébi is used to denote the entire western region, including Bamako, Kati, Kita, Kayes, Bakel, etc., as far as the ocean.